



Winston H. Hickox  
Secretary for  
Environmental  
Protection

# California Regional Water Quality Control Board

## Los Angeles Region

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Gray Davis  
Governor

**TO:** Interested Parties

**FROM:** Samuel Unger  
Unit Chief, TMDL Unit 2

**DATE:** June 16, 2003

**SUBJECT: SANTA CLARA RIVER TOTAL MAXIMUM DAILY LOADS FOR  
NITROGEN COMPOUNDS  
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING AND TRANSMITTAL OF  
TENTATIVE BASIN PLAN AMENDMENT AND STAFF REPORT**

On August 7, 2003, the California Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Board) will consider a proposed amendment to the *Water Quality Control Plan for the Los Angeles Region* (Basin Plan) to incorporate a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) to reduce nitrogen compounds loading to the Santa Clara River. A public hearing is scheduled for **Thursday, August 7, 2003** at 9:00 A.M., in the **Board Room of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, 700 N. Alameda Street, Los Angeles, California**. At the public hearing, the public will have opportunity to provide oral comments on the proposed TMDL.

A copy of the Tentative Basin Plan Amendment and Staff Report for the Santa Clara River Nitrogen Compounds TMDL is posted on the Regional Board's web page. The web address is <http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/rwqcb4/html/meetings/tmdl/tmdl.html>. Please contact Elizabeth Erickson at 213-576-6683 or Sam Unger at 213-576-6784 with questions or to request additional copies of the staff report and related materials.

Oral presentations should be summarized in writing to the extent possible. Time limitations on presentations may be imposed. In order to review and to assess comments, the Regional Board staff must receive written comments no later than 5:00 p.m. on **July 31, 2003**. Comments should be submitted to:

California Regional Water Quality Control Board  
Los Angeles Region  
320 West 4<sup>th</sup> Street  
Los Angeles California, 90013

ATTN: Elizabeth Erickson

### California Environmental Protection Agency

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\*\*\*For a list of simple ways to reduce demand and cut your energy costs, see the tips at: <http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/news/echallenge.html>\*\*\*



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## Background

The proposed amendment would incorporate into the Basin Plan a TMDL for nitrogen loading to Santa Clara River. As background, Regional Board staff considered studies of conditions related to nitrogen loading to the Santa Clara River. In consideration of elevated ammonia and oxidized nitrogen compound levels in the Santa Clara River, US EPA listed Santa Clara River on its 1998 303(d) list of impaired waterbodies in California, and on the 2002 303(d) list of impaired waterbodies, the State has again proposed listing the Santa Clara River as a result of nitrogen compound impairments.

The Regional Board's goal in considering the above-mentioned TMDL is to reduce nitrogen loadings in Santa Clara River. Reduced loadings will enable the River to achieve water quality standards related to nitrogen compounds. The water quality standards ensure that beneficial uses associated with aquatic habitat and groundwater recharge, among others, will be fully supported in the Santa Clara River. Elevated levels of ammonia are known to cause toxicity to aquatic organisms and elevated levels of oxidized nitrogen are known to cause eutrophic effects in freshwater systems.

The Regional Board is charged with implementing the provisions of both the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act (California law) and the federal Clean Water Act in the Los Angeles Region. Section 303(d)(A)(1) of the Federal Clean Water Act requires the State to identify water quality limited segments within the Region (i.e., those water bodies not attaining water quality standards), and establish TMDLs for the pollutants causing the impairments. A TMDL specifies the maximum amount of a pollutant that a water body can receive and still meet water quality standards, and allocates the acceptable pollutant load to point, non-point and natural sources. The TMDL can be expressed in terms of either mass per time, toxicity, concentration, or other appropriate measures.

Analysis of the extensive nitrogen compound monitoring data collected from public treatment works's effluent and within the Santa Clara River has shown that ammonia and oxidized nitrogen concentrations exceed water quality objectives for these compounds. The Regional Board staff has prepared this TMDL to address the documented nitrogen water quality impairments in Santa Clara River.

The TMDL establishes a plan for reducing the loading of nitrogen compounds to the Santa Clara River from point sources. Wasteload allocations (WLAs) are given to major point sources of ammonia and nitrogen compounds to the Santa Clara River. Load allocations for non-point sources are set equal to a 20% reduction in the current estimated sources.. Load allocations may be revised in the future if monitoring data indicate that loads are higher than estimated in this assessment and the prescribed WLAs do not result in attainment of water quality objectives. It

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also sets forth special studies, including one to consider a site-specific objective for ammonia in Santa Clara River, one to assess if groundwater discharge is responsible for the elevation of the surface water nitrate concentrations, and one to assess aquatic life conditions impairment within the Santa Clara River Watershed. The TMDL focuses on reducing the sources of nitrogen compounds from POTW effluent.

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